



The Annunciation

Charles H. Misner



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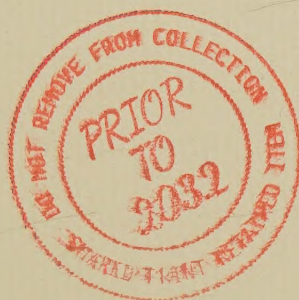


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THE ANNUNCIATION



THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
NEW YORK • BOSTON • CHICAGO • DALLAS
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MACMILLAN & CO., LIMITED
LONDON • BOMBAY • CALCUTTA
MELBOURNE

THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA, Ltd.
TORONTO

COLLEGE OF THE HOLY NAMES
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA.

THE ANNUNCIATION

AND OTHER POEMS

BY
CHARLES H. MISNER

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1926

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REMAINDER OF THE NEW SERIES
JANUARY 1926

P\$
3525
I8548

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Set up and electrotyped.
Published May, 1926.

15135

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA BY
FERRIS PRINTING COMPANY

Nihil Obstat

ARTHUR J. SCANLAN, S.T.D.

Censor Librorum.

Imprimatur

✠ PATRICK CARDINAL HAYES

Archbishop, New York.

New York, April 5, 1926.

To S. M. I.

“He made the dumb to speak, the deaf to hear.”
And thou, His handmaid, thou hast made my lays—
A dumb voice—reach and prick the heedless ear,
My ears unstopped to hear the voice of praise.

FOREWORD

These are poems of Faith. This book is a book of verse, not a manual of piety.

If the author has taken the Sacrament of Poetry profanely, he does not expect absolution of his sacrilege or to escape the exterior darkness, because he wears the wedding-garment of piety. It may be spotless and cover him as a cope—but it is the easiest of vestments to put on. He is not ordained to wear it and he asks no deference to his pontifical masquerade.

But the faith is genuine and the piety is not pharisaical. When faith utters itself in words, it of necessity uses the language of piety, because the language of piety is the language of faith, too. But faith has a nobler utterance than words. When it utters itself in life, that is piety itself, the substance not the form only—and this in its fulness is the high achievement of the saints.

These are poems of Faith, because they portray in verse three great mysteries of the Christian religion, the Incarnation, the Passion and the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Faith is not a barren assent of the intellect to dogmas of revealed truth; much less is it an acceptance of incredible mysteries by ignorant credulity. Faith is life.

If, like Mary, we keep and ponder all these things in

F o r e w o r d

our hearts, Faith becomes as sight, a mystical vision of supernatural truths revealed as transcendent realities glowing with beauty and power and dynamic as life itself.

Architects designed and artists and artist-craftsmen built the great Gothic cathedrals, but genius to create these sublimities comes to humanity only once or twice in a millennium. But men do not therefore give up the building of homes, and they dare even with such talent as they have to rear temples to God, and in so doing they are neither presumptuous nor futile.

It is hoped that these verses will appeal to some as the glow of the hearth-fire appeals to all and that they will bring a homely and cheerful comfort to souls that have no dreams of glory here, but have faith and hope. And it may be that some will find in them such refreshment of the spirit as the wayfarer finds in the cool and shadowy emptiness of a country chapel, where, if God abides not therein, He yet deigns at intervals to visit and which is still sweet with the fragrance and peace of His fugitive presence.

This is the aspiration and the temerarious adventure of this book.

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THE GATE, THE WAY AND THE GOAL

MARY!

Through thee, the Gate, the King of Glory came;
All generations bless thy blessed name.'

With Christ, the Way, thou walkedst the dolorous way;
The thoughts of many hearts confess thy sway.

The Risen Christ unto Himself, the Goal,
Assumed thy virgin body and thy soul;

Thy Solomon, He set thee on His throne,
Thy womb-born John, He took thee to His own.

Oh, Queen, exalted o'er the Seraphin,
Through joy and woe to triumph help me win.

THE ANNUNCIATION

I

Luke i. 26, 27

The angel Gabriel was sent from God, into a city
of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused
to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house
of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

"Lord Gabriel!"—

Heaven to thrilling heaven answereth,
And choirs angelical,
In rhythmic swell and fall
Of tremulous awed breath retell
Vibrations of light inaccessible;
Glow and abate,
Ineffable pulsations of music increate—
The voice of God.

Straightway the archangel casts him down
His golden crown,
And prone
Before the throne
In ecstasy of worshipping desire doth wait,
Transfigureate,
The high command, where all commands win
heaven-bruited laud.

[*Page Fifteen*]

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

"Go"—

Again the word

Is heard

And the abyss of light to Triune music stirred:

"Go thou to Nazareth of Galilee

Go to the virgin spouse,

A virgin spouse is she,

Of Joseph, son of David's house.

The virgin's name is Mary."

Awe made the heavens mute

A moment hushed the song, a moment stilled
the lute.

Then soft and sweet and slow

The seven lamps Seraphic glow:

"Mary!

The virgin's name is Mary!

The Virgin Mary!"

Lo,

At that name, that God-elected name,

The heavens with sudden glory are aflame;

A clangorous pæan of triumphant psalms

Bursts from the cymbals' brazen palms,

And piercing sweet,

The exulting trumpets' golden tongues repeat;

And harp and hautboy, viol and lute

And silvery whistlings of the flute,

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

Ardors of the seraphim,
Dartings of the cherubim,
And thousand times ten thousand angel voices
 blent

In one supernal sacrament
Of joy and praise
Their laud upraise:

“Mary!

The Virgin’s name is Mary!

The Virgin Mary!

Her seed shall crush the serpent’s head

And Death give us his captive dead.

The serpent lieth for her heel.

The serpent’s head her heel shall feel.

The virgin’s heel shall crush the adversary.

The virgin’s name is Mary!

The Virgin Mary!”

Above,

Beneath the very throne of Love—

Of Father, Son and Holy Dove

The Three-in-One—

The whirling lightnings of the living creatures run

Athwart the empyrean.

And rainbowed on those burning skies

Lazuline flashes of their million eyes,

A sapphire span

Lambent upon a molten sun;

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

Or, by the spirit drave
Across the crystal pave
Their living cars
Shake with their wheelèd thunders the mosaic
stars:

“Mary!
The virgin’s name is Mary!
The Virgin Mary!”
‘Mary!’
“The Father calls—He sues her maiden duty!”
‘Mary!’
“The Spirit calls—He woos her maiden beauty!
The Son—the Son abhorreth not the virgin’s womb.
The hour—the hour is come, the serpent’s doom.
The Son abhorreth not the virgin’s womb,
The virgin’s Son shall crush the adversary,
The virgin’s name is Mary!
The Virgin Mary!”

And faintly from afar,
From star to farther star,
Across the chaos cold—
Void, voiceless, old—
The rolling spheres repeat,
Faint, and haunting sweet:
“Mary!
The virgin’s name is Mary!
The Virgin Mary!”

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

And from the nether verge, the far sidereal verge,
The morning stars in choir—
Faint as the pulse of silence—the morning stars
 respire:

“Mary!
The virgin’s name is Mary!
The Virgin Mary!”

And lo, the listening Earth
Re-echoes Heaven’s mirth
And trembles to the far angelic urge;
And faint, elusive, sweet,
With timorous beat
Antiphonal
Of wind and surge,
The sad earth joins the angel festival:
“Mary!
The virgin’s name is Mary!
The Virgin Mary!”

Elusive, faint,
Like music heard in dreams,
(Or heard, twixt wake and sleep, or only seems?)
Or snatches of far childhood’s lullabies
That sing themselves in twilight reveries;
A wraith of song by Fancy, delicate sprite,
Plucked from the heart of all the silences,
The void of lost delight.

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

So far and faint
In wistful plaint
Of wakened memories
Of Eden's harmonies
The wailing winds, the surging seas,
The surging heart of Earth, the hearts of men
 reciprocal
To Nature's immemorial ritual,
With murmurous beat
Antiphonal
Repeat:
"Mary!
The virgin's name is Mary!
The Virgin Mary!"

And all the Guardian Angels hear.
Triumphant, clear,
Their loud hosannas ring.
From all Earth's sin-polluted coasts
The Guardian Angel hosts
Their tribute bring,
Their joyance sing:
"Mary!
The virgin's name is Mary!
Sin-shadowed man's sole luminary!
The Virgin Mary!"

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

So earth and highest Heaven,
The rolling planet fires,
The palpitating stars, the morning stars in choirs,
All, all rejoice!
(Even the chaos cold—
Void, voiceless, old—
Feels the creative leaven,
The thrill of life elate,
As though the unborn vast reverberate
The living thunders manifold)
All, all rejoice,
One voice!
As the voice of many waters, as the voice of seven
 thunders,
As the shock of battling armies and the charging
 chariots jar,
As the crash of toppling mountains which the
 shattering earthquake sunders,
One single voice of glory all the many voices are!
One voice,
They all rejoice:
“Mary!
The virgin’s name is Mary!
Sin-shadowed man’s sole luminary!
The Virgin Mary!
Her seed shall crush the serpent’s head
And Death give up his captive dead.
The serpent lieth for her heel.

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

The serpent's head her heel shall feel.
The virgin's heel shall crush the adversary.
The virgin's name is Mary!
The Virgin Mary!"
'Mary!'
"The Father calls—He sues her maiden duty."
'Mary!'
"The Spirit calls—He woos her maiden beauty.
The Son—The Son abhorreth not the virgin's
womb.
The hour—the hour is come, the serpent's doom.
The Son abhorreth not the virgin's womb,
The virgin's Son shall crush the adversary.
The virgin's name is Mary!
The Virgin Mary!"

And from the highest heaven,
The diapason of the glowing Seven:

Apoc. vii, 12

"Amen!
Benediction and glory
And wisdom, and thanksgiving,
And honor and power,
And strength,
To our God
For ever and ever!
Amen!"

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

II

Uprose
The archangel.
Glow
With deific splendors God's evangel.
He cleaves the chaos cold—
Void, voiceless, old—
A flaming sword
Toward
The Earth his goal.

The Earth his goal,
A twinkling asteroid
Across the void;
A pharos-mole
That wavers on a sea of lustrous dark;
A spark—
A jewel flashing in a golden-dusky aureole.

A flaming sword
He cleaves the chaos cold —
Void, voiceless, old—
A flash!
One fiery gash
And gone! and whether or a sign
Benign,
Or menace dread,
The flaming sword is scabbarded.

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

(And Magian watchers on their lonely towers,
Counting the promised hours,
Saw,
And with adoring awe
They said—
“The fiery sword is scabbarded;
The sword
Of Eden’s ward
That turneth every way
Is sheathed for aye!”
They said—
And their weary hearts were comforted.)

The flaming sword
Is scabbarded in light,
Not night.
A radiance outpoured,
The quenched glory flares and spreads and grows
Amid the stellar archipelagoes,
Empyreal,
Sidereal,
Until the amazed constellations own
The regnant burning kindled at the Godhead’s
throne,
And all the starry zone
One lucent splendor shows,
A crystal blazon of celestial rose!

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

(And Magian watchers on their lonely towers,
Counting the promised hours,
Saw,
And with adoring awe
They said:
"The midnight skies with light are palpitant
And God remembereth His covenant!"
They said—
And their hearts were comforted.)

But swift is angel's flight
And fleet the goings of the messengers of God,
A flame of fire!
Before the overawed
And stricken constellations win again their frustrate
 light,
Or ever the sidereal burnings fade
To starry shade,
The sweeping pinions of the angel fan
The Earth's meridian.

A flame of fire!
A blast of God's consuming ire
He sweeps the infected ether;
With breath of flame, the flaming breather
The thronging demons of the ether drives
To their charnel hives
In chasmèd caverns claustral

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

Of adamantine ice,
In polar desolations, boreal and austral.

He circles thrice
The dreaming Earth;
And as he goes
With lustral winnowing of his wings he blows
The dispolluted skies
And all their starry eyes
To radiant glows,
To sparkling brilliances,
Pellucid clarities
And primal purities—
A taintless paradise
Wherein no rebel angel flies.

On winnowing wings
He circles thrice
The dreaming Earth,
In ever narrowing rings
Precise.
And the dreaming Earth is zoned
With a girdle, golden-toned,
With a deeper golden zoning than old Saturn's
threefold girth.

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

III

Isaias ix. 1-3

Arise!

Be enlightened, O Jerusalem! For thy light is
come; and the glory of the Lord is risen upon
thee. For behold, darkness shall cover the
Earth and a mist the people: but the Lord shall
arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen
upon thee.

And the Gentiles shall walk in thy light, and kings
in the brightness of thy rising.

At his passing from the North
Lo, a glory cometh forth,
A pageantry of nations yet to be,
A prophetic pageantry
Of the Gentile kings to be
Who will bring their strength and glory to the
King of Kings.

Lift up your gates, Jerusalem! be lifted up, ye
gates!
For the King of Glory waits!

Through the opal mist that lies on
The velvet-black horizon
The northern stars shine out like silvern lamps;
And a spectral kingdom looms

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

Through the silvered ebon glooms
And a concourse of strange peoples and a martial
pomp of camps.

Jerusalem the glorious, lift up your jewel-gates!
For the King of Glory waits!

Fiat!
Swing the gates of beauty! Spring the zenith-
kissing arches!
Flings the holy North her banners—her auroral
banners flings,
Ensigns of the King of Kings!
Turquoise torrents ever flowing,
Flags of molten rubies blowing,
In a windless air;
Rippling jade and sun-shot amber for a pathway
for the King,
From the zenith, pulsing, glowing,
To the dark horizon ring
Runs the royal highway of the King of Kings!
And to a soundless fanfare
Of silvery trumpetings,
The spectral army marches
Through the shining arches,
To company the King!
To keep the royal highway of the King!
To guard the viewless coming of the King of Kings!

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

(And Magian watchers on their lonely towers,
Counting the promised hours.

Saw,

And with adoring awe

They said:

"Behold the heavens ope

And cometh forth our Hope

And God shall with his people dwell

Emmanuel!"

They said—

And their hearts were comforted.)

Swing wide your gates, O Nazareth! swing wide
your holy gates!

For at your lowly portal,

Invisible, immortal,

The King of ages waits!

IV

Apoc. viii. 1

There was a silence in Heaven, as it were for half
an hour.

Silent, intent,

The angel hest awaits the high event,

Creation's cause and end, its base and firmament:

The creature by the Maker wooed,

The emptying of infinitude!

[*Page Twenty-nine*]

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

As Mary prayed,
A presence dawned upon her cloistered sight,
A shape of light,
But in her shining purity
Only a radiant shadow he—
And Gabriel to Mary profound obeisance made.

Silent, intent,
The angel host awaits refusal or consent.

Luke i. 28, 29

And the angel being come in said to Mary: Hail!
full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art
thou among women. Who, having heard was
troubled at his saying and thought with her-
self what manner of salutation this should be.

O delicate humility! O trembling lowliness!
O silent wisdom testing the legate's holiness!

Luke i. 30-34

And the angel said to Mary: Fear not, Mary, for
thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou
shalt conceive in thy womb and shall bring
forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus,
and he shall be great and shall be called the
Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will
give to him the throne of David, his father,

[*Page Thirty*]

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

and he shall reign in the house of Jacob
forever, and of his kingdom there shall be
no end.

And Mary said to the angel: How shall this thing
be, because I know not man?

O steadfast chastity! O tranquil power!
O word of wisdom saving her virgin flower!

Luke i. 35-37

And the angel answering said to her: The Holy
Ghost shall come upon thee and the power
of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And
therefore, also, the Holy which shall be born
of thee shall be called the Son of God.

And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath con-
ceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth
month with her that is called barren.

Because no word shall be impossible with God.

Expectant, tense—

The silence vibrates and a sigh

Aeolian sweeps the angelic host

As, forward bent,

They wait, transfixed, all Time's supreme event.

A gasp, a prayer, a cry

To the high God for that dear mortal maid

Upon whose head is laid

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

(Already bowed in meek obedience)
The awful choice, refusal or consent;
To be God's mother, bear the Divine embrace,
Or fail, and from the heart of fallen man
Pluck his one hope of grace.

(And Magian watchers on their lonely towers,
Counting the promised hours,
In spirit heard and saw,
And with perturbèd awe
They said:
"Now, will the second Eve
Believe?
Will God his creature wed?
And will the creature dare the Godhead spousals
dread?"
They said—
And their hearts were high with hope, their hearts
with fear were lead.)

Eager, intent,
The angel host
Breathless harks for the great consent.
Even the Seven,
With pulseless breath,
Earthward rapt, forget their Heaven.
Yea, the abyss
Of Godhead bliss

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

Surges, flames to the bridal kiss.
Yea, the God Triune
For a creature's boon
Stoops to the nest of the Virgin's breast.
Lo, and the Dove
Shadows His love.
Hovers above His virgin dove
The Holy Ghost!—
Speak, O maiden of Nazareth!

Luke i. 38

And Mary said to the Angel: BEHOLD THE HAND-
MAID OF THE LORD, BE IT DONE TO ME
ACCORDING TO THY WORD.

O tower of David! Ivory tower!
O seat of Wisdom! O enclosed bower!

V

Luke i. 38

And the angel departed from her.

The boreal splendors pale and fade.
And all the vibrant shade
Is musical
With song angelical:

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

“Mary!
The virgin’s name is Mary!
Sin-shadowed man’s sole luminary!
The Virgin Mary!”

(And Magian watchers on their lonely towers—
Come are the promised hours—
In spirit heard and saw,
And with adoring awe
They said:
“Now hath the second Eve believed,
Isaias’ visioned virgin hath conceived,
And God doth with his people dwell
Emmanuel!”
They said—
And their hearts were ravishèd.)

The air is full of caroling,
The heavenward winging angels sing:

The Seraphim

“Hail Mary!”

The Cherubim

“The virgin’s name is Mary!”

The Thrones

“Full of grace!”

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

The Dominions

"Sin-shadowed man's sole luminary!"

The Virtues

"The Lord is with thee!"

The Powers

"O Virgin Mary!"

The Principalities

"Blessed art thou among women!"

The Archangels

"O Virgin-Mother, Mary!"

The Angels

"The holy that shall be born of thee shall be called
the Son of God!"

In Chorus

"Hail Mary!"

And from the highest heaven
The diapason of the glowing Seven:

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

Apoc. v. 13

“Amen!

To Him who sitteth on the throne,

And to the Lamb,

Benediction and honor,

And glory,

And power,

For ever and ever;

Amen!”

THE EPIPHANY OF MARY

Luke ii. 42-52

Lo, at His mother's yearning word, her unshed
tears

He put His Father's business by—what voiceless
years!

John ii. 1-11

And lo, now at her whispered word and wordless
sign,

He speeds His Hour: His East is red with Cana's
wine.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

FIRST STATION

JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

Strong God! A creature's creature dares to tie
These hands almighty; Cæsar's underling
To judge the Sovereign Judge. Father! to fling
Thy Christ, Thy Holy One, to dogs that cry,
"GIVE US BARABBAS! JESUS CRUCIFY!"
Thine own anointed dare. They cry, "No king
But Cæsar!"—all the people answering,
"His blood on us and on our children lie."

O God! They rave beneath the demon's sway.
But I—my sin!—I? In that mob of hell?
My arms upflung, my writhing fingers claw
The empty air. I mouth a bloody spray.
God! pluck me thence and from my heart expel
The Legion devil. Clothe me in Thy law.

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

SECOND STATION

THE CROSS IS LAID ON JESUS

O Judah's deathless King! Is this the throne
Thy people give to Thee—a cross of shame?
The heavens are Thy glory-seat. A flame
Of seraphs crowns Thee. Earth, a bubble blown
Of mist and fire, and hung, a sardius-stone
In space, Thy footstool is. Thou calledst by name
This people, seed of Abraham. They came.
They feared. On Moses' face Thy glory shone.

But now their hearts are bold, for Thou art come
In lowliness, and meek; and as a lamb
Before the shearers, Thou, O God, art dumb!
Oh, look on me! Behold the thing I am!
My heart is ashes and my hands are numb—
A Caiaphas a *faithless* Abraham.

T h e W a y o f t h e C r o s s

THIRD STATION

THE FIRST FALL OF JESUS

A serpent, winged, erect, of lustrous scale—
Familiar shape to Eve's untroubled eyes—
The tempter came to Eden. Fit disguise
To hide the scars of hell, yet seem to veil
Celestial splendors. Oh, that mortal bale
Should come to man as from supernal skies,
An angel visitant, his vesture's dyes
Lucent with star-dust—fiend, in seraph's mail!

O, Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord of Hosts!
Doth Satan strike Thee with the serpent's curse?
Dost Thou eat earth upon Thy belly prone?
Exult, ye deeps of Hell, ye fiery coasts!
Cry Heaven's High King a thrall of Lucifer's!—
Pride's fool! Christ *stoops* to lift man to thy
throne!

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

FOURTH STATION

JESUS, BEARING HIS CROSS, IS MET
BY HIS BLESSED MOTHER

Mother of God! of creatures creature sole!
The term, in finite being, of God's power!
Than angels purer; fairer than the flower
Of Eve's unfallen innocence! The goal
And Sabbath of Creative Will! The scroll
Of Holy Writ (The Word) and virgin bower
Of God Incarnate, thou! Woman, the hour!—
The King, thorn-crowned; the Priest in blood-dyed
stole!

God pity thee! God pity thee, O mother!
What sudden vision films thine anguished eyes?
A little laughing babe thy kisses smother,
A little toddling boy—the vision dies.
Then straining shapes, the felons and their Brother,
A mask of blood, thy Son—the Sacrifice!

T h e W a y o f t h e C r o s s

FIFTH STATION

SIMON OF CYRENE IS IMPRESSED TO CARRY THE CROSS

Heave up thy mighty shoulders, patient ox,
And bend thee to the yoke that tyrant right
Lays on thee—nay, forestall the alien's might!
Lo! eyes, blood-sealed, a mother's cry unlocks,
A tremor shakes, the cross-bowed Victim rocks!
Leap, Simon! kneel, thou serf of Rome! Rise,
Knight

Of Christ! Thy pity wins thee, Israelite,
This bloody accolade, acclaim—of mocks.

Hail, Standard-bearer of the King of Kings!
Hail, Simon, first of an immortal line!
The King, struck down, yields thee the standard-
cross.

Lord Christ, an abject, poor, a failure flings
Himself at thy dear feet. O Lord benign!
Lift up this helot-flesh, this soul of dross.

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

SIXTH STATION

VERONICA* WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

O valiant woman! meet and Christlike grace!
That thou should staunch His blood who staunchèd
thine!

Mobs press him now—the Lord—but love like wine
Doth make thee bold, nor mob, nor Roman mace
Shall stay thy ruth. Wounds leprous that no trace
Of beauty leave in Him—oh, wondrous sign!—
Imprint thy veil, an effigy divine!
Thy vesture touched him, lo, the Holy Face!

Love, Thou hast made me whole by wounding me
With pity of Thy piteous wounds! Their stain
Hath made me clean, and, blind with tears, I see
Beneath the livid masks of souls sin-slain,
The image, dim, divine, defaced of Thee!
Let not Thy wounds, Love, plead to me in vain.

* Tradition identifies Veronica with the hæmorrhissa of the Gospels.—
Catholic Encyclopedia.

T h e W a y o f t h e C r o s s

SEVENTH STATION

THE SECOND FALL OF JESUS—AT THE CITY GATE

More than a mother loveth her first-born
Hast Thou loved these. Their famished souls
were fed

With truth, their hearts with love, and faint for
bread,

Thy hand almighty multiplied the corn.

And now they turn and rend thee. Bleeding, torn,
They cast Thee from their gates. Where late they
spread

Their garments for thy beast, Thy kingly head
Doth kiss the dust; Thine ears are filled with scorn.

And Thou hast fed me a diviner food,

Thy flesh, my daily bread, Thy blood, my wine;

Thy Holy Word my spirit's interlude.

And I have cast Thee from this heart of mine.

More cruel than the cruel zealots' brood,

I flung Thee forth beneath the feet of swine.

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

EIGHTH STATION

JESUS WARNS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

Weep not for me, ye daughters desolate!—
Can sin, the Sinless One consume? But weep
When Israel the wrath divine shall sweep,
Like flame in dry-wood, red, insatiate.
Weep! when the infant of her womb shall hate
His mother's shriveled breasts whence no drops
seep.
Weep! when that famished mother's hands shall
reap
His flesh as wheat, *her* ravening flesh to sate.

Love, teach me fear—the holy fear of sin,
The fear that saveth from destruction fell,
The gate of life where Wisdom enters in.
But let me weep Thy woe. Let pity well
From founts of penitence, that I may win
My lost soul from the yawning jaws of hell.

T h e W a y o f t h e C r o s s

NINTH STATION

THE FALL OF JESUS—AT THE FOOT OF CALVARY

A sudden ebb of life; the Figure swoons.
A tumult mutters—roars. The leaden lash
Falls pitiless. The cruel spear-points gash
The senseless flesh. Far off, the wailing croons.
A mother's shuddering cry—the lowering noon's
Loud clamors pause, the thunder's growl, the clash
Of mob and cohort. "Son!" He stirs. The flash
Of life reacts—far off, the wailing runes.

As lifeless as the soulless clod my soul;
The loathsome life of death possesseth it;
For me no moan, no human heart hath dole.
Christ's mother prays. The dumb, the infinite
And dark of death is pierced. The grace-tides roll.
I live! O bliss! O anguish exquisite!

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

TENTH STATION

JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

The High-Priest stands, pontific, thunder-browed,
While slaves, uncircumcised, the Holy Ark
Unveil and strip the Temple-Body, stark,
To every gaze, unclean, profane, disvowed.
And, lo, His angels, for His body's shroud,
Like Noah's sons, a coverlet of dark
Spread o'er that holy shame. The sun, a spark,
Hangs in the noonday heaven whelmed in cloud.

O God and Man! Again the gentiles rage!
And hands of sacrilege, obscene and red,
Pollute the Temple, rape the Veil of Bread!
And hearts adoring—heavenly embassage!—
Like smoking thuribles with spices fed,
Breathe Thee a covert of odorous umbrage.

ELEVENTH STATION

JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

Hath God grown weary of beatitude?
Hath glory palled? Doth majesty oppress?
Else whence this fury, this divine excess
Of pain and infamy his Christ hath wooed?
Nailed to a gibbet, thorn-crowned, blood-imbrued,
With face distorted, hair one clotted tress,
Convulsed as if His soul to dispossess,
A worm, no man, He writhes upon the rood.

O rash soul! here is more than majesty,
The God of glory here all state above—
Instant, eternal, inviolate and free.
Delight? Joy? 'Tis the leaping flame, but love
The central fire! Here, love's infinity!
Here on this tortured heart broodeth the Dove!

TWELFTH STATION

THE AGONY AND DEATH OF JESUS ON THE CROSS

Alone, forsaken, desolate, afraid!
The Son of God, and lo, He tasteth fear!
Holy, He is made sin and on the sheer
And awful height of Godhead shrinks dismayed.
Yet is He Lord of fear and is obeyed;
And by His own will on Barabbas' bier
Is stretched. And all hell's dungeons quake to hear,
"It is consummated." The debt is paid.

Lord I am fearful, and forlorn and lone!
And in me sin is lord and life is death,
And death is sentient—knoweth life unknown.
Save me!—O, Breath that strainest for Thy breath!
Save me!—*Who diest*, and Death is overthrown!
Save me!—Thou Life that all life quickeneth!

T h e W a y o f t h e C r o s s

THIRTEENTH STATION

THE BODY OF JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

“Take to thy cold, cold breast, His heart death-cold,
And on His breathless lips rain kisses sweet.
And kiss his piercèd hands, His piercèd feet—
Call back His spirit to Its fleshly fold.
Nay, all thy sighs shall quicken not this mold,
Nor all thy ardors kindle kindred heat.
Thy heart will break nor stir one faint heart-beat—
Thy Son is dead! thy Dream! thy God! Behold!”

Thus spake the High-Priest by his mocking leer.
Thus spake the rended earth, the riven sky,
And spake the tempter echoing His death-cry:
“Thy God, by God forsaken, lieth here!”—
Yea, God! beneath this sleep-doffed battle-gear,
God! in the pulseless breast, the lightless eye!

FOURTEENTH STATION

THE BODY OF JESUS IS LAID IN THE SEPULCHER

The last dear symbol of His presence, dight
With ruby wounds, thou givest to the tomb,
And turning, facest wan the falling gloom—
Without is darkness, in the grave is Light.
He came in silence in the silent night.
The Power shadowèd thy virgin womb
And Life leaped, virgin, to that cloistered room—
So now, the grave He knows but not its blight.

And I have walked a Dolorous Way, forlorn,
To Golgotha accurst from Nazareth—
From sinless Nazareth!—O Dismas mourn!
Remember me, O Lord, as fails life's breath!
Cleanse me and save me at the darkling bourn
From carnal stain and from the bite of death!

THE RESURRECTION

She knew not day had been. Primeval night—
The night before God spoke, "Let there be
light!"—

Enfolded her dazed soul,
A darkness whole,
And utter loss—
The sealèd tomb, the naked cross.

But, lo, quick tides of olden gladness start
And break in music on her lonely heart.
A wind of dawning bursts the blank dark through
And shows her lifted eyes the star-sown blue.
A gust of wings, a gleam of Gabriel,
And tears of memory from her seared heart
well.

The dawn, Herostratus, the great dome fires
And Dian on the sun-god's heart expires.
The burning ripples of the day-spring run
And glow the barriers of the orient sun,
And flaming fountains quench the pallid stars.
In glorious ruin crash th' horizon bars,
And Phoebus rises, bright essential god,
'Mid conflagration and celestial laud.

T h e A n n u n c i a t i o n

Behold! A greater Dawn! Earth's rock-ribbed
womb
With Life resurgent quakes. And from the tomb
The Sun of Justice rises, retinued
By angel majesties, and saints, grave-mewed,
To greet His rising; and the beauty bright
Of vernal morn and all its dear delight.

The Lord is risen, rejoice! Ye Saints, rejoice!
Ye Angels, give your golden trumpets voice!

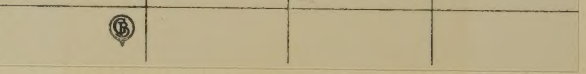
His risen glory round Our Lady streams,
(A darksome splendor radiant Gabriel seems!)
Caught up, enfolded in His girdling wounds—
"Whose wounds are suns"—she feels His kiss;
she swoons
His burning heart upon. So rapt, "My son,"
She breathes, "Jesu, my own, my Glorious One!"

ENVOY

MY LADY, MARY

I launch my little boat of rhymèd rune
Here, where the fourfold Eden rivers meet.
Is it a crescent or a wasted moon?—
I filched it, Lady, from beneath thy feet.

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